



Republican Policy Committee

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Agility and Larceny

Giving the Democrats Credit

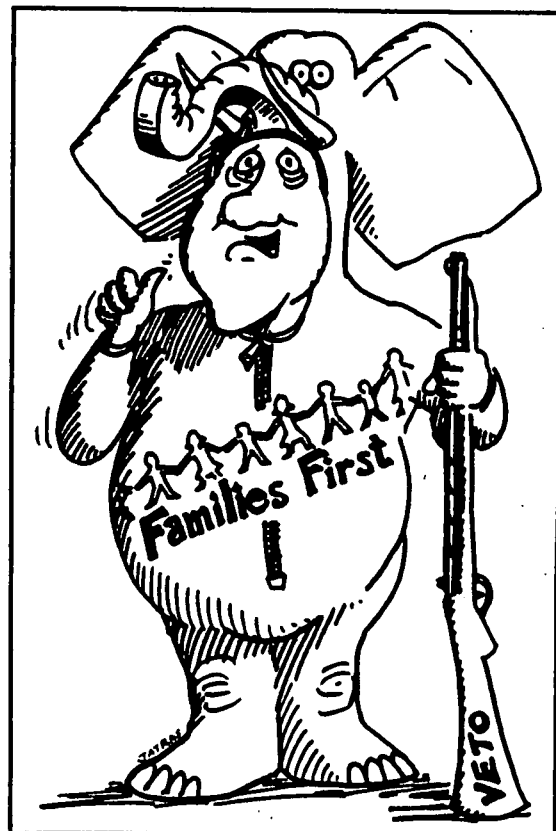
You've got to give the President credit. He's quick.

Bill Clinton is the most agile man ever to hold the presidency. There hasn't been a man this fast and flexible in the Oval Office since the American gymnastics team stopped by for a photo-op — and it's doubtful that any gymnast has a better back flip than the President.

The man has lightning reflexes. If Bob Dole sneezes when he gets out of bed, the President will announce later that morning that millions of American households lack Kleenex. If Senator Dole puts strawberry jam on his toast, the President will tell school children that same afternoon to brush after every meal. And if the Dole campaign sends down to the corner deli for BLTs, the President will be on CNN within the hour asking for extra mayo and an order of fries.

Democrats as a whole are not as quick as their leader. The Democratic establishment has just announced something called "Families First" which is a list of platitudes masquerading as an agenda. It has taken the Democratic establishment two years to steal this idea from Republicans, whereas the White House political machine is now so nimble that if Bob Dole pauses in speech Bill Clinton will complete his sentence.

"Families First" is a bold and innovative stroke that might set the American agenda for maybe a couple of hours, tops. With "Families First" the Democrats have come out firmly in favor of work, children, families, education, responsibility, and



"Sure, it looks silly — but it sells!"

even fairness. With all these good issues now taken, Republicans probably will have no option but to abandon the field, leaving the issues of war and hunger and pestilence to the minor political parties.

In contrast to the Democrats' platitudes, in March of 1994 the Republicans in the House of Representatives forced a vote on a real, particularized, costed-out alternative budget that went by the name, "Putting Families First"! Does that title have a familiar ring?

When the Democrats came straggling along two years later and put out their own "Families First" they omitted the verb, presumably because verbs express action. Even without the verb, though, the Democrats are going to need to raise taxes by something like \$500 billion to pay for their "Families First". Beware Democrats bearing platitudes.

That 1994 Republican budget provided a \$500-per-child tax credit, funded new anti-crime initiatives, required welfare reform, made a down payment on market-based health care reform, indexed capital gains (to help stop that ubiquitous thief, inflation), and reduced the deficit by some \$150 billion. That's a pretty good start for *putting* families first.

The Republican budget had to contain stuff like that — you know, genuine reforms using real numbers — because under the strict congressional budget rules it is not in order to vote on a list of platitudes, even if they do cost \$500 billion.

Every Republican who sat in the House in March 1994 and who now sits in the United States Senate (Senators Grams, Inhofe, Kyl, Santorum, Snowe, and Thomas) voted for that 1994 Republican budget, "Putting Families First". And in 1993, then-Governor John Ashcroft chaired a commission on America's urban families that published a report called, yup, "Families *First*". American voters know that Republicans are committed to putting families first, "at the head of the line, ahead of the bureaucrats and the grantees, the contractors, the planners, the regulators, and do not forget the consultants."

And why do Republicans put families first? Because "the family is the first and best Department of Education. The first and best Department of Health and Human Services. The first and best Department of Housing. And the first and best Department of Energy and Transportation. There is no instrument of economic growth, savings, and job training as effective as the middle-class family. It is the repository of values. It is the sustainer of society. And our Government has chiseled away at its foundation for 40 years."

The Democrats can't steal *that* truth from America's moms and dads.

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Illustration by Jim Jatras

[Quoted statements are from Congressman Henry Hyde (R-IL) and Congressman Tim Hutchinson (R-AR).]